

REMARKS

In the aforementioned Office communication, claims 21, 41, 47, and 58 were rejected as being fully anticipated by Roy under Section 102, and claim 24 under Section 103 based on Roy in view of Colson '440. Claims 27 and 35-39 were rejected under Section 103 as being unpatentable over Roy in view of Strand et al. It should be noted, however, that while independent claim 35 is noted as being rejected under Section 103, the examiner has made no comment regarding how the subject matter of independent claim 35 is deemed obvious in view of the prior art. In fact, for reasons to be set forth hereafter, it is not felt the subject matter thereof is suggested or disclosed in the prior art.

Before discussing the claims to point out the distinctions therein from the prior art, a summary of the prior art is deemed appropriate. Looking first at the patent to Roy, a louver-type blind is disclosed wherein a plurality of slats are formed by folding a strip of material along adjacent fold lines. In an alternative embodiment shown in Figs. 10 and 11, the slats are formed from separate strips that have been folded, but, in each instance, the slats are generally inverted V-shaped. The panel of inverted V-shaped slats is supported by a lift cord 30 with the lift cord being secured to the panel of slats near the top so that by moving the lift cord in one direction the panel of folded slats will drop by gravity from the extended position of Fig. 7 to a retracted position of Fig. 8. Of course, movement of the lift cord 30 in the opposite direction raises the slats to the extended position of Fig. 7. Accordingly, the slats are supported by lift cords, which can raise or lower the slats to extend or retract the shade with the lift cords extending through perforations provided in the panel of slat material.

The patent to Strand was cited as showing a blind wherein a material having a plurality of slats supported by lift cords 4135', as seen in Fig. 51B, has a parallel fabric incorporated therein, but as you will be appreciated from the discussion of the claims as set forth hereafter, this feature of the original claims, which was found in Claim 27 has been cancelled.

The patent to Colson '440 was cited as showing slats having a shape similar to half a teardrop, but this feature of the present invention is not an element of any of the independent claims now in the application, and it is felt, for reasons to be set forth hereafter, that the independent claims themselves are patentably distinct from the prior art, which would of course render each dependent claim therefrom allowable.

In the present invention, as can be appreciated by reference to Figs. 1-3B, a fabric is formed from a plurality of interconnected vanes where each vane is comprised of a flexible component 45 having first and second longitudinal edges and a rigid or semi-rigid component or slat 43 also having first and second longitudinal edges where the first longitudinal edge of component 43 is secured to the first longitudinal edge of the flexible component 45. The second longitudinal edge of each flexible component 45 is secured to an adjacent vane at the location where the first edges of the first and second components of the vane are connected together. In this arrangement of the vanes, the flexible component of each vane might be referred to as a flexible support structure with the flexible support structure supporting the rigid or semi-rigid components or slats of the vanes. Further, it will be appreciated that the flexible components of the vanes comprise in combination a sheet of material formed from the integrated flexible

components of the vanes with the sheet of material itself being the support structure which supports the rigid or semi-rigid slat components of the vanes.

Claim 21 has been amended herein to describe the aforementioned fabric as comprising a "flexible vertically extending sheet of material" (i.e. the interconnected flexible components of each vane) and slats which are rigid or semi-rigid members secured to the support structure so as to form an acute angle with the support structure and wherein movement of the slats is totally dependent on movement of the support structure. It should be appreciated the support structure is defined in claim 21 as being a sheet of material which distinguishes the fabric of the present invention from those in the prior art. In other words, as will be appreciated from both Roy and Strand et al., the support structure is in the form of lift cords and not a sheet of material. In Colson, the vanes and support structure are all made of the same material so that the support structure is not flexible while the vanes are made of a rigid or semi-rigid material. Accordingly, it is felt claim 1 in its amended form is patentably distinct from the prior art. Claims 30-34 being dependent either directly or indirectly on Claim 21 are felt to be allowable for the same reason.

Another embodiment of the present invention, which is set forth in Claim 35, is shown in Figs. 51A and 51B of the present application. As mentioned above, the examiner did not specifically address claim 35 in the aforementioned Office action. In the embodiment of the invention defined in claim 35, a plurality of adjacent fabrics is claimed as being positioned in adjacent architectural openings in a building structure with each fabric comprising a flexible vertically-extending support structure and a plurality of parallel elongated vanes supported at spaced locations along the support

structure with the vanes comprising semi-rigid slats secured to the support structure so as to form an acute angle with the support structure and wherein movement of the vanes is totally dependent on movement of the support structure, but further wherein each of the fabrics includes a top edge and a bottom edge with one of the top or bottom edges being fixed in an associated architectural opening and the other of the edges being vertically movable with the other of the edges being alignable with the other edge of an adjacent fabric so as to form a continuous non-linear edge of the aggregate plurality of fabrics. As can be appreciated by referring to Figs. 51A and 51B of the present application, each of the plurality of three fabrics illustrated has a top edge being fixed in position and a lower edge that is non-linear so as to form a continuous non-linear edge aligned with an adjacent lower non-linear edge of one of the other plurality of fabrics. In other words, with reference to the left-hand fabric shown in Figs. 51A and 51B, its lower edge is a convex non-linear line while the middle one of the plurality of fabrics is concave and formed from a non-linear line that is continuous from the convex lower edge of the left fabric. Similarly, the right fabric has a lower convex non-linear edge, which is continuous with the non-linear lower edge of the center fabric, which as mentioned above is concave. As will be appreciated, a combined covering is therefore disclosed and rendered unique by the continuous non-linear edge of the movable edges of the fabrics, which is not shown or suggested in the prior art.

Accordingly, Claim 35 and Claims 36-39, which are dependent therefrom, are felt to be allowable for that reason.

New claims 49 and 50 have been added to the application. New claim 49 is directed to the feature of the present invention discussed previously wherein each

elongated vane is defined as having a flexible component with first and second longitudinal edges and a semi-rigid or rigid component with first and second longitudinal edges and wherein the first edges of the components of each vane are connected and the second edge of each flexible component is connected to an adjacent vane. Claim 50 is dependent from Claim 49 and further states that the second edge of each flexible component is connected to an adjacent vane at the connection of the first edges of the components of the adjacent vane.

As mentioned previously, the prior art fails to show such a fabric and, accordingly, claims 49 and 50 are felt to be patentably distinct from the prior art as well.

There being no other objections or rejections of the application, it is felt to be in allowable form. Allowance of the application is therefore courteously requested.

Dated this 9th day of April 2009.

Respectfully submitted,



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GMP/dtc